



# Fort Ord Dunes General Plan



## Agency and Public Comment Report 1

### INTRODUCTION

The California Department of Parks and Recreation is developing a General Plan for the future Fort Ord Dunes State Park. Working together with agencies and the public, this planning process will create a vision for the future, provide recommendations for facilities improvements, and set guidelines for managing the park so it can be enjoyed for years to come. A California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) required Environmental Impact Report is being prepared along with the General Plan.

The planning process is getting underway and the first of many opportunities for agency and public input is complete. On May 28, 2003, a CEQA Notice of Preparation was distributed through the State Clearinghouse, notifying State agencies that a General Plan and Environmental Impact Report would be prepared for Fort Ord Dunes, and inviting those agencies to provide input and comment. Release of the Notice of Preparation began a 30 day review period. In addition, the Notice of Preparation was submitted by the California Department of Parks and Recreation to federal and local agencies of interest. Agency comment letters received are described below.

Also in late May, an informational newsletter and survey was distributed to interested members of the public, as well as agencies of interest. The newsletter and survey, along with the Notice of Preparation and information regarding the planning process, were posted on the California Department of Parks and Recreation Planning Website ([www.parks.ca.gov](http://www.parks.ca.gov)). Surveys received are described below.

The newsletter, the planning website, and a May 29, 2003 press release invited the public to a workshop where the planning process would be discussed. The workshop was held on June 10, 2003 at California State University Monterey Bay in Seaside, California and public input provided at the workshop is described below.

The agency and public comments received through July 3, 2003 will be considered in the development of general plan issues and concerns, opportunities and constraints, and draft alternatives. Following preparation of draft General Plan alternatives, another public workshop will be held and comments on the draft alternatives and other planning issues will be received at the meeting, or via mail or fax. The next public workshop is tentatively scheduled for Fall 2003. It is noted that public comments may be submitted to the California Department of Parks and Recreation at any time throughout the planning process, but that the various public outreach meetings and comment periods indicate specific points in the planning process where agency and public input is most crucial to development of the General Plan.

## **AGENCY COMMENTS**

A total of three agency comment letters were received during the 30 day Notice of Preparation scoping period:

- Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency, Robert Jaques, Director of Engineering Planning and Technology. Submitted June 10, 2003.
- Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, Fran Farina, Acting General Manager. Submitted July 2, 2003.
- City of Marina, Jeffrey Dack, Director of Planning. Submitted January 9, 2003.

The city and county agencies main comments addressed infrastructure issues, including wastewater reclamation, water supply, and traffic circulation within the future State Park. For instance, the Monterey Regional Water Pollution Control Agency urged that public access be limited in the water percolation pond areas, which are interconnected with the emergency overflow capability of their wastewater treatment plant. The Monterey Peninsula Water Management District recommends that the groundwater setting in the Seaside Basin be addressed, specifically in terms of how the future park may use water sources from this basin. Lastly, the City of Marina recommended that reference should be made to the Marina General Plan in order to remain consistent with the policies related to traffic circulation.

## **WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Approximately 155 surveys were received through July 3, 2003. Surveys received were from a wide range of geographical locations, and expressed a range of issues, concerns, and desired future use for Fort Ord Dunes. The following sections summarize the public comments submitted.

## ORIGIN OF RESPONDENTS

Of the total 155 respondents 122 were from California and 33 were from outside the state. Californians who responded to the survey were from the following 21 counties:

<u>County</u>	<u>No. of Respondents</u>
Monterey	36
Sacramento	5
San Diego	5
Santa Barbara	5
Los Angeles	4
Orange	3
Santa Clara	3
Santa Cruz	3
Alameda	2
Contra Costa	2
Fresno	2
Marin	2
San Bernardino	2
San Francisco	2
Butte	1
Kern	1
Nevada	1
Riverside	1
San Luis Obispo	1
San Mateo	1
Yuba	1

Respondents from outside of California reside in the following places:

<u>State</u>	<u>No. Respondents</u>
New Jersey	5
Massachusetts	3
Texas	3
Colorado	2
Nevada	2
New York	2
North Carolina	2
Arizona	1
Florida	1
Georgia	1
Illinois	1
Kansas	1

<u>State</u>	<u>No. Respondents</u>
Montana	1
Ohio	1
Oregon	1
Pennsylvania	1
Rhode Island	1
Utah	1
Virginia	1
Washington, D.C.	1

## FREQUENCY OF VISIT

The frequency at which respondents intend to visit Fort Ord Dunes when it is open to the public is as follows:

- Regular Visitor (daily or weekly) – 17
- Occasional Visitor (monthly) – 36
- Infrequent Visitor (1-6 times per year) – 87
- Once or twice in lifetime – 3

Most visitors from areas outside of Monterey County indicated that they would visit the park once or twice annually. Most of respondents who indicated they would visit the park daily or weekly were from Monterey County. Two respondents indicated that they would never visit Fort Ord Dunes and the remainder did not provide an answer.

## USER ACTIVITIES

Below is a list of all the activities respondents indicated they would like to have at Fort Ord Dunes and the number of surveys that mention each activity.

<u>Activity</u>	<u>No. Respondents</u>
Clothing-optional beach, nude recreation	109
hiking, walking, or beachcombing	84
beach access	79
camping	65
cycling	41
surfing, bodysurfing	24
sunbathing	23
swimming	21
nature study, birding, or botany	9
Picnicking	5
Volleyball	3

<u>Activity</u>	<u>No. Respondents</u>
Fishing	3
Jogging	2
SCUBA diving	2
historic interpretation	2

Other activities mentioned once were kayaking, sailing, hang gliding/paragliding, cooking, volunteering, kiting, and beach combing with a metal detector.

The desire that Ford Ord Dunes provide a clothing-optional beach and/or an area for nude recreation was mentioned on 109 surveys. These respondents identified themselves as naturists (and/or nudists). Most of the surveys returned by naturists indicated the availability of a clothing-optional beach as their primary concern and did not mention other concerns about the park, such as habitat protection or other environmental issues. All of the respondents from areas outside of California identified themselves as naturists or nudists.

Access to the beach, and hiking and walking, were the next most common stated activities. Sixty-five respondents indicated camping as an activity they would like to be available at Fort Ord Dunes.

## LIKES AND DISLIKES

In response to the question of what they value most about Fort Ord Dunes, most survey respondents indicated the beautiful, natural setting of the beach and its natural state. Many specifically indicated that they would visit the beach because of its history as a clothing optional beach. Many respondents also stated that they enjoy the beach because of its secluded setting and lack of crowds.

Among the present features of Fort Ord Dunes that respondents indicated they liked least were the accessibility to the beach, the lack of parking, trash on the beach, and lack of restroom facilities.

Respondents indicated facilities or additions they would like to see in the park. An officially-designated clothing optional beach was the most suggested change mentioned by respondents. Some respondents also noted that appropriate signage should be used to designate the clothing optional area and “warn” visitors who may want to avoid clothing optional areas.

The next most mentioned suggestions were restrooms, parking, and a campground. To a lesser degree, respondents mentioned hiking and biking trails, as well as picnic tables. Many respondents also mentioned the need for habitat protection and restoration, particularly among the dunes.

## PARK PRIORITIES

Overall, respondents expressed support for a balance of habitat protection and public access for recreation. A few respondents expressed the opinion that habitat conservation should be a high priority over public access, while a few respondents expressed the opposite opinion, that public access should be a high priority over habitat conservation.

## ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Approximately half of the total respondents included concerns about environmental issues with respect to the operation of Fort Ord Dunes as a State Park. The most common concern was for the protection of dunes and native plant species. Protection of snow plover, Smith's blue butterfly, legless lizard, and sea lions were mentioned by at least one respondent. A few respondents suggested that access to the dunes be restricted and clearly marked trails be established to help restore native flora. A few respondents expressed concern about dune erosion caused by the remaining pipe outfalls. One person suggested that the park aim to educate visitors about responsible use of the park with respect to its sensitive resources.

The second most prevalent response expressed concern regarding the potential for over development of Fort Ord Dunes. Many respondents expressed that they think Fort Ord Dunes should be developed as little as possible and that new construction should be minimized. Some stated that commercial activity should be restricted. Others expressed that Fort Ord Dunes should be kept "wilder" than other state parks nearby and only limited access should be provided.

A few respondents expressed concerns about the clean up of trace pollutants, including lead contamination, and live ammunition and bullet fragments left from the Army's former use of the property.

A few respondents promoted the preservation and reuse of Stilwell Hall. One respondent thought it should be removed.

Many comments were stated only once and are summarized below:

- Restrict horses on the beach during low tide only and only on wet sand.
- The unobstructed viewsheds should be maintained.
- The future park should include educational and interpretive components.
- Increased vehicular traffic through adjacent residential neighborhoods in Marina to access the future park could increase congestion.

- Noise from traffic near the future park could hinder the visitor experience.
- Glass and alcohol should be prohibited.
- Trash cans should be provided.
- Motorized vehicles and power boats should be prohibited.
- Provide a ranger for visitor safety.
- The park plan should minimize pavement for parking and trails.
- If existing buildings are retained, then the sewage treatment system shall be improved.

## FAMILIARITY WITH MARINA AND MONTEREY STATE BEACHES

In an attempt to gauge the types of beach uses respondents have participated in regionally, the survey asked whether respondents had ever visited Marina or Monterey State Beach. Approximately one third of the survey respondents indicated they had been to either Marina State Beach or Monterey State Beach. Most engaged in typical beach activities such as walking, picnicking, sunbathing, and surfing. A few stated that they dive at Monterey State Beach and a few mentioned bicycling.

## PUBLIC WORKSHOP 1 COMMENTS

As noted above, the first public workshop for the future Fort Ord Dunes State Park planning process was held on June 10, 2003 on the California State University Monterey Bay campus. The purpose of the workshop was to provide members of the community the opportunity to voice opinions regarding the goals and ultimate design of the future Fort Ord Dunes State Park. Approximately 35 people attended the workshop. After a brief introduction of the State Parks General Plan process and the existing conditions of Fort Ord Dunes, the attendees were divided into three discussion groups—each with either California Department of Parks and Recreation staff or their general plan consultant guiding discussions. Each group was guided through topics related to resource concerns and potential uses and facilities for the future park and was asked to provide input on each topic. As the discussions progressed, the public input provided was recorded on easel pads.

The comments raised were varied and diverse. Most of the sentiment recorded during the workshop supported the limitation of built facilities in the park, with more emphasis placed on natural, native landscape features being preserved

and protected. Although accessibility was supported, most agreed that it should be small-scale and the method of access should be pedestrian or bicycle, rather than any form of vehicular access. Emphasis was placed on maintaining connectivity with the Monterey Bay Marine Sanctuary, and the values governing its protection, as well as adjacent land use, such as Marina State Beach. Concern was raised regarding the potential for hazardous materials to affect future park users.

Some examples of input received are as follows:

- Emphasis should be on hiking, low impact camping, historic interpretation—all without off-road vehicle access.
- Some facilities should also include areas designated for hang gliding.
- Some park design should include areas to allow surfer access and dune exploration.
- Emphasize the connectivity with the marine sanctuary.
- The focus of the Park should be habitat interpretation, exploration, and special-status species protection.
- Accessibility should be limited to paths or boardwalks.
- Provide easy access points in areas least sensitive.
- Balance various recreation access with natural interpretation.
- Identify areas of less sensitivity for public access.
- Remove non-native species.
- No barriers should be installed, unless they are naturally occurring.
- Disturbed areas should be for day-use.
- Stilwell Hall site provides a possible vista point.

Further, the interpretation of the military history and existing military structures on Fort Ord Dunes was advocated. In addition, some asserted that conference grounds similar to Asilomar State Beach might be beneficial for the community.



## CONCLUSION

The extensive input provided by agencies and the public, as summarized above, will be informative in the process of developing a General Plan for the future Fort Ord Dunes State Park. The planning team will utilize the public and agency comments to develop planning alternatives. Generally, the comments submitted focused on a desire for a balance of resource protection and public uses, and an appropriate range of public use types, facilities, and visitor protection.